

**Speech by Professor Tan Eng Chye, NUS President  
at the Launch of WIL@NUS Corporate Laboratory  
19 June 2018 at NUS University Hall**

Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Finance and Chairman, National Research Foundation

Mr Kuok Khoon Hong, Chairman and CEO, Wilmar International Limited

Professor Low Teck Seng, CEO, National Research Foundation

Professor Chua Nam-Hai, Chief Scientific Advisor, Wilmar International Limited

Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, Chairman, NUS Board of Trustees

Distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

1. Welcome to NUS! Thank you for joining us at this special event, to celebrate the launch of the WIL@NUS (pronounced as ‘Wilmar at NUS’) Corporate Lab. This is the fourth Corporate Lab at NUS, made possible by the foresight and support of the Singapore Government.
2. Academic-industry partnerships like the WIL@NUS Corporate Lab are important, because they enable both partners to reach new frontiers and achieve outcomes that may not be possible on their own.
3. By working with NUS, Wilmar aims to develop a new range of food products and ingredients that enhance health and well-being. These exciting new products will be specially tailored to meet the taste preferences of Asian consumers. (I think it’s true that most of us prefer Nasi Lemak to Spaghetti Bolognese or muesli bars.) Through this collaboration, Wilmar also hopes to develop disruptive technologies for greener and more sustainable production of industrial enzymes and biochemicals.
4. For NUS, the partnership with Wilmar will allow our research to be translated into innovative products and processes that bring concrete, positive and lasting impact on Singapore’s population health and environmental sustainability.

5. NUS is privileged to partner with Wilmar International, which is Asia's largest agribusiness group. Likewise, I hope that Wilmar will find in NUS, a worthy partner. Over the years, NUS has made rapid progress to be among the top 30 universities globally, and one of Asia's top universities.
6. Partnerships allow us to leverage on each other's strengths, resources and capabilities.
7. WIL@NUS comprises two research clusters. One cluster is looking into the clinical evaluation of functional food ingredients and food products on Asian populations. Researchers in this cluster come from the Singapore Centre for Nutritional Sciences, Metabolic Diseases, and Human Development, or SiNMeD. SiNMeD is a research centre jointly set up by the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences under A\*STAR. SiNMeD will contribute its expertise in clinical nutrition, to help determine how and whether specific combinations of different food ingredients and functional foods can alter their absorption and metabolism, and their effectiveness in preventing disease or promoting health. Through these entities, WIL@NUS can tap on clinicians and a well-established clinical trials infrastructure, to study the food products' performance in humans.
8. The second research cluster under WIL@NUS focuses on the cost-efficient and sustainable bio-production of industrial enzymes and biochemicals. This cluster will leverage on the technology and resources developed by the NUS Synthetic Biology for Clinical and Technological Innovation or SynCTI research programme. For example, the Bio-Foundry at SynCTI, with its state-of-the-art robotic systems, will allow WIL@NUS to seamlessly automate key operations in the design, building and testing of superior engineered microbes and enzymes that are suitable for the commercial bio-production of specialty chemicals. SynCTI hosts a national Synthetic Biology Consortium called SINERGY, which is supported by the NRF. It also collaborates closely with School of Medicine and NUHS; this provides a streamlined platform to facilitate clinical and safety assessments of the final food products.

9. In short, NUS is pleased to see that WIL@NUS is off on a very strong footing. Its two research clusters are well supported and connected to the academic and research infrastructure in Singapore.
10. Let me also mention the special, longstanding and fruitful relationship between Wilmar and NUS. We share close ties on many levels. Over the years, Wilmar has generously contributed nearly \$10 million to support various causes at NUS, such as research, student financial aid, and public policy programmes. We are deeply grateful that Wilmar had recently pledged to additionally support two full term bursaries and two full term scholarships each year. I would like to thank Mr Kuok Khoon Hong, an NUS alumnus, and Co-founder, Chairman and CEO of Wilmar International, for his personal generosity, and for extending Wilmar's corporate support.
11. I must also thank Professor Chua Nam-Hai, Wilmar's Chief Scientific Advisor, for his vision, determination and enthusiasm that has made this Corporate Lab a reality. Professor Chua's association with NUS is a long and close one, dating back to his undergraduate days, reading Botany and Biochemistry at the then University of Singapore. Professor Chua rose to become an eminent scientist of international distinction. I understand that to date, Professor Chua remains the first and only Singaporean-born scientist to be elected as a Fellow of the prestigious Royal Society in the UK.
12. Mr Kuok Khoon Hong and Professor Chua Nam-Hai are distinguished NUS alumni. We are honoured and grateful that you have paved the way and have chosen NUS to be Wilmar's partner.
13. I would also like to express my appreciation to researchers and administrative staff from NUS and Wilmar, who have worked long and hard to get the Corporate Lab up and running. Many thanks to NRF, A\*STAR and EDB too, for your guidance and support through this formative journey.

14. NUS looks forward to a fruitful partnership with Wilmar International. We are committed to making the WIL@NUS Corporate Lab a great success. Thank you.